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STATE FOR OES/SAT, EAP/CM, ISN/MDSP AND T  
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SUBJECT: NASA DISCUSSES COOPERATION WITH CHINA NATIONAL SPACE  
ADMINISTRATION

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#### Summary

1. (SBU) On April 24, NASA Assistant Administrator (AA) for External Relations Michael O'Brien briefly met with Dr. SUN Laiyan Administrator of the China National Space Administration (CNSA) to discuss upcoming NASA-CNSA bilateral expert group meetings on cooperation in earth and space science. Administrator Sun emphasized his continued support (REF A) for the working group (which is comprised of four smaller expert groups) that was established as a result of the 2006 Bush-Hu summit. The two also discussed a wide range of issues including China's next generation launch vehicle, China's lunar program, the Beidou satellite navigation program, and the China-Russia collaboration on the Phobos Mars mission. According to a meeting participant from the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT), the new Department of Civil-Military Technology Integration has assumed oversight responsibility for CNSA, a role previously held by the State Administration for Science, Technology, and Industry for the National Defense (SASTIND). End Summary

#### Reinvigorating CNSA-NASA Working Group Cooperation

2. (SBU) CNSA Administrator Sun stated that his organization stands ready to cooperate in the areas named during the first joint CNSA-NASA working group meeting held in December 2008 (REF B). Sun also said that bilateral cooperation should begin with highly-focused efforts that eventually can be widened. The AA agreed that success on smaller, highly-focused science projects should be the key to cooperating on more complex programs. Sun was especially keen on the earth observation data exchange experts group, noting that earth observation, telecommunications, and navigation satellites are all state key programs for China.

#### CNSA Discusses Manned Space and Other Major Efforts

3. (U) Sun said that the recent award given to China's manned space

program by the prestigious U.S.-based Space Foundation in Colorado Springs "honored us highly and encouraged our efforts." In response to Sun's question regarding the retirement of the U.S. space shuttle and the impact this would have on International Space Station (ISS) operations, the AA explained that Europe had already successfully flown its Automated Transfer Vehicle (ATV) to the ISS in 2008 and Japan is now preparing to launch the HII Transfer Vehicle (HTV) later this year.

14. (SBU) Noting that manned space exploration is a risky endeavor, Sun thanked the AA for providing a copy of the Space Shuttle Columbia accident report and asked that Mr. O'Brien convey condolences on behalf of CNSA the next time he meets with families of Columbia crew members. Sun said that China is on track to launch two Shenzhou manned vehicles by 2011 that would be used to validate docking and rendezvous technology--a necessary step before moving on to the more complex task of building a space station. Sun said that China has no plans for a human lunar mission, despite press claims otherwise. Sun further noted that while the press is always trying to convey the impression that a new space race is underway between China and the U.S., the CNSA-NASA relationship demonstrates that nothing is farther from the truth. Sun said China is motivated by its domestic needs for socioeconomic development, and not by competition with the United States.

15. (SBU) Sun briefly highlighted major unmanned space efforts in which China is currently engaged, including the development of a heavy-lift, next generation launch vehicle capable of placing 25 tons into low-earth-orbit [NOTE: Currently China's largest launch vehicle is only capable of lifting nine tons into low-earth-orbit.

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END NOTE.] The vehicle will be built in Tianjin and shipped by sea to China's future launch site on Hainan Island, which is currently under construction. Sun noted that to prepare for this move CNSA and other entities are studying how the European Space Agency transfers Ariane vehicles from Europe to Kourou (in French Guiana) for launch. He also said China's Beidou satellite navigation program, with its "nearly limitless" applications within China, is progressing smoothly. The first dozen satellites in the system will provide regional navigation services, but ultimately, China intends to launch several more satellites that would provide China with global satellite navigation capability. China is also working closely with Russia on its Phobos-Grunt mission to Mars. According to Sun, China is building a small satellite called the Yinghuo-1 that will piggyback on the Phobos spacecraft and serve as a Mars probe. The mission is scheduled to launch in October 2009.

#### New Organization Assuming Oversight of CNSA

16. (SBU) In addition to the three CNSA participants, Dr. TU Senlin the Director General (DG) of the newly-formed Department of Civil-Military Technology Integration (CMTI)--what will likely prove to be a powerful arm of China's Ministry of Industry and Information Technology--also attended the meeting. The CMTI DG Tu told ESTHOFF that his department had recently assumed oversight duties for China's space and nuclear industries previously held by the State Administration for Science, Technology, and Industry for the National Defense (SASTIND). He also said the goal of CMTI is to transition technological advances made in China's defense industries into civil and commercial technologies. [NOTE: This bolsters recent claims by Chinese nuclear officials that SASTIND would be systematically dismantled or left as a hollow shell. SASTIND, in all of its previous incarnations, has played a major role in shaping the direction of China's defense modernization since its establishment in 1982. END NOTE.]

#### Next Steps

17. (U) Administrator Sun said that CNSA Deputy Director-General for Foreign Affairs WANG Keran will be the primary interface for coordinating the joint expert group meetings with NASA. CNSA Vice Administrator LUO Ge previously held this responsibility (REF B), however LUO Ge was not present at the meeting, nor was there any mention made of LUO throughout the discussion.

18. (SBU) COMMENT: The meeting between the two space agency leaders was very cordial and appears to have set a positive tone for the upcoming CNSA-NASA expert group meetings, which are yet to be scheduled. It remains to be seen how CMTI's oversight of CNSA will impact future cooperation with NASA; however, the CMTI DG Tu said he was very pleased to see China-U.S. cooperation in the nuclear and space sectors moving forward. He also appeared to have genuine admiration for the United States, noting that he spent four "excellent" years obtaining his PhD at the University of Maryland. The establishment of CMTI and the potential dissolution of SASTIND marks a significant step forward in China's drive to modernize its defense industrial complex, and will likely result in Chinese defense industrial firms having greater autonomy to manage their own affairs. END COMMENT

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